

THE PROFESSION OF THE ARCHITECT INFLUENCED BY ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION.

ALL are ready to impute the causes of failure to any other object than themselves; but we believe that we truly ascribe the chief obstacles in the profession of architecture to architects. And, whatever other causes there are, that contribute to ill-success, there is one which we are bound to consider, viz., education. We have said enough to shew, that "engineering" is but one department of architecture. But the general world believe, that they are as much distinct as law and medicine; and the calculation of the strength and stress of timber, the designing of iron roofs, of buildings under water, and many similar matters, which an "architect" must comprehend, properly to practise his profession, even as it is understood by some, are held to have no connection with architecture, but to be the province of engineers. This is not merely a popular opinion. At the commencement of the works of the Houses of Parliament, an extensive colliery and river wall were required. To whom must this be entrusted? We might be excused for supposing the architect; but the Government thought otherwise,—it was not an architect's business,—they consulted an engineer. Now, why the delusion, as it seems to be, that architecture and "engineering" are two professions, and that an amount of knowledge is required in the latter, which is assumed to be unnecessary in the former, should be so carefully fostered, we do not understand. We cannot have the least objection to any one devoting his chief time and attention to the construction of railways, or of reservoirs, or of harbours, any more than we have to his choosing, as his main object of study and professional practice, any other department,—ecclesiastical architecture, or domestic architecture, or whatever else he may think most worthy or best adapted in his particular case, of being made a principal. But it does not follow, if really he is properly qualified to undertake any of these, that he ceases to be an architect, any more than that he who has become celebrated for some class of diseases, ceases to be a physician.

The right course of education has yet to be prescribed for the united profession, although it has been attempted in one branch. We would have the pursuit of architecture free to any who may choose to qualify themselves for it, but we do say there is danger, when the influx of a new class is accompanied by a name for that which was already defined,—that a course of training may be substituted, not less empirical than that, the supposed defects of which may have led to the innovation. He who designs a church or a palace must not be a designer merely of that small portion which meets the eye; and he who is fitted to design a bridge, a lighthouse, or a factory, must be something more than a calculator. There is, indeed, but one profession, and one preparatory course. That pursuit it is no ill-considered assertion to say, is of more extensive scope than any which can engage the attention of man, or of which any recognized appellation so utterly fails to give an impression. The term architecture, which some would confine to the art, whilst they admit the impossibility of a separate existence of that "art," is inadequate, even when employed as it is more generally by architects. Painting and sculpture, in their highest walks, and ornamental art in most of its departments, we have already taken some pains to shew, belong to the profession of the architect. The resources of what, with the insufficiency of language, we call "architecture," are in every beautiful form and natural production, and in the laws which regulate the mechanism of the universe, and necessarily demand qualifications in the professor, which scarcely admit the possibility of a limit. Now we believe, that "architecture," if the education necessary for it were conducted somewhat in the manner which we hope to be able partially to indicate, would present the nearest approach to these qualifications which any prescription will supply, and that the use of a new term, one much less comprehensive than that till lately adopted universally, is only calculated to mislead. We have recognized the principle of subdivision into departments, as necessary in any profession, and our meaning will be still further shewn.

We have said, that we are anxious to open

our inquiry into the causes of the peculiar impediments to success in the profession of architecture, by a confession of the miserably imperfect state of architectural education. That a pursuit in life, which more than any requires a prescribed course of study, as well as every aid, essential for the speedy transaction of mere drudgery of business, should be precisely that which is most deficient in both the one and the other, is a circumstance which should ere this have received much greater attention. We fear that there is reason to say, that the attainments for which Sir Christopher Wren was thought worthy to hold the chair of the Royal Society, are now inadequately appreciated by "architects," and the education necessary for the profession of architecture, can be in no degree complete, unless it holds in an important rank, objects of study, for which a higher reputation, justly or out, is generally ascribed to "engineers." Admitting that at the commencement of railway construction, architects were strangely blind to the opportunities open to them, it must be allowed that the new class, called into existence, shewed an energy in supplying any disadvantages which they may have possessed, and that they soon rendered themselves best fitted to undertake these works. But the circumstance, which we believe we are accurately stating, that architects would not, at sufficiently short notice, have qualified themselves for these undertakings, so as to ensure a successful result with the same certainty as in the case of a building, shews that professional education is not what it ought to be, a preparation for the practice of a comprehensive profession, to be expended according to the direction into which unforeseen influences may lead. Scholastic education is rightly intended to be the preparation for active life, the particular course of which it is felt to be almost impossible to pre-arrange, and the most important knowledge which it is sought to impart, is that which is universally applicable, and indispenable, whatever may be the calling of the future man. A profession is chosen, and the student has made a nearer approach to his future course, yet comparatively all must still be uncertain; and even later in life, he knows not at any time, in what department the altered prospects of a day may require the devotion of his energies. His only safe course to provide for the future, whether as a school-boy, or as an architectural student, is to perfect himself in the knowledge of elements, to lay up so many talents, that out of these, he may select such as opportunities will allow the cultivation of, since, as one deep thinker and poet has said, we do not forget knowledge; acquirements are always retained, though they may await the demand of an actual want, to call them into vitality and productiveness.

It is not, therefore, merely that there is no course, collegiate or otherwise, prescribed as a preparation for the profession,—no examination and diploma to distinguish him, as an architect, who may be confided in, in what involves immense outlay, as well as health and comfort,—but that nothing that can deserve the name of a system, has ever been suggested. Consequently, a student—if the name be not profaned in thus using it—follows the bent of his taste or impulse, and—mere drawing excepted—it is only a chance whether what he takes up, will ever be called for in active life. The object of all education should be, to make the mind an index to knowledge, rather than to attempt completion in a few things. For all professions, that education would be best, which might perhaps be styled "superficial," and it will require the full amount of exertion to attain even that. Thus, drawing should be mastered in all its departments; facility in expressing the ideas should be held one of the tools of the art, indispensable as compass and rule, rather than an accomplishment, in which skill could necessarily be obtained only by a few. Mechanics and natural philosophy, chemistry, geology, and mathematics, are of more moment to the architectural student, than is the perfect knowledge of every characteristic of some one style of architecture. In the former case, the elements of future researches are acquired; in the latter, too valuable time is taken from this elementary course, which would be productive, in hazardous conjectures on the chances of life. Measuring and estimating work, the principles of design and

construction, and sufficient knowledge of the constructive details, the anatomy of ordinary buildings, to delineate them accurately in drawings, should be then, the matter of earnest attention to the student, rather than those more abstruse researches which require the attention of the architect. In short, it is politic, as far to provide for the chances of the future, that no subject that may suddenly require consideration, will have to be deferred during the attainment of elements. How many have had to commence the study of such subjects as we have mentioned, when time was much too valuable to be so expended.

The preparation for the profession of architecture, we said, involves far more labour than it would, were there more system in some departments of its practice, matters of business, rather than of art or science, that scarcely deserve to have the labour of study, and yet are essential in the practice of the profession. Even the higher branches of knowledge might be presented to the reader in such concise form, that there might be reasonable hope of acquiring a comparatively accurate insight into them, during the limits of ordinary life. The existence of many departments of architecture is thus forgotten, and the art itself, the main end of architecture, has little influence. Time and thought have to be expended, and memory burdened with what should be matters of routine, or have proper aids for reference. Contrast the state of chemical science, previous to the arrangement of the nomenclature, and the discovery of the principle of combining equivalents, and the state of that science in consequence of the mere mechanical facilities from these aids. Consider the unnecessary outlay of time, through the want of concise tables of reference, through having for one fact to read through volumes, instead of consulting indices. The price-books may well exemplify our meaning: before there were such aids, the attention must have been withdrawn from the art, merely to preserve in the recollection what can be much better got by reference. What knowledge of history could one retain, or acquire, without chronological tables? He who consulted a good atlas, might have a better knowledge of geography than one who merely circumnavigated the globe, though the one might devote a day, and the latter a life, to the undertaking. In any other study, every aid that can shorten the labour of the student is diligently provided; in every other profession there are manuals, precedents, and data of every kind. Yet in the profession of architecture, we do not even know a book which gives information, as to the usual routine in carrying out a work, the duties of the architect, and the rates of professional remuneration for various services. Were there such an authority—as there ought to be—universally admitted as such, a week would suffice to give what now there is extreme difficulty in getting at all, and in many, how great would be the time then allowed for higher objects. Guitt's Encyclopedia, and Bartholomew's Specifications, both seem to have been projected with some knowledge of such wants, yet only aid in supplying them. A good book of precedents, and data connected with the tenure of land, leases, contracts, valuations, forms of proceeding with, and rights of, local boards, forms of notices, and agreements, is equally necessary.

How much may be done by method in imparting information, the pamphlets of the Cambridge Camden Society have shewn, and the "Chorch Schemes," published by the same Society, are also instances of something resembling what we wish to see in many branches of investigation. And how much time would be saved by architects; were there merely a depot for inventions connected with buildings, as lately pointed out in this Journal? In fact,—we repeat—system and order, are the life and soul of every study, and of the practice of every profession, and every aid which can contribute to them, will prove a proportionate gain to those researches, which really require the unfettered energy, the full devotion of intellectual power. He who would lay down a fit course of study for the profession of architecture, would be the author of a national good. We trust we have before contributed something to the knowledge of what architecture is, and of what should be the ingredients of that study.